

**MEETING:** Some 30 people showed up to express opinions

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five days per week and with minimal disruptions. With many children still ineligible to be vaccinated, masks are an effective way to help keep our kids safe in the classroom, the learning environment we know serves them best.”

A brief letter from Superintendent Curt Scholl sent out to parents Monday August 2, following Brown’s announcement, said, “With the rise of the Delta variant, Governor Kate Brown announced last week that the mask requirement will again be required at the start of this school year. Although we are not excited about this requirement, we are grateful our students will be in school every day.”

Together these statements raised the ire of a vocal group of attendees to the meeting.

Rodney Cooper, a recent candidate for the school board who has grandchildren in Sisters schools, spoke first and asked the board three questions, including how many school-aged children had died in Oregon of COVID-19, whether the Board had read any articles from pediatricians and child psychologists about the dangers of wearing masks, and whether the Board was making decisions “out of fear of this unjust government.”

Amy Larrabee, a mother of students in the district, said that Oregon’s “resilience framework is advisory (sic) and not a requirement.” She quoted from Scholl’s letter, pointing to the word requirement as being misleading. “You guys have a choice to make that affects all of our children — their mental well-being, their physical well-being, and who they are as people growing up in our community.”

She cited a letter from Crook County’s school district addressed to the governor, which argued that, after a summer of serving over 1,000 students in summer school programs with no cases or spread of the virus, that district was urging Brown to let local districts make their own decisions.

Larrabee cautioned the Board to consider how much money the district would lose if families pulled their children out of school over the mask issue, eliciting cheers and comments of agreement from the crowd.

“We are the taxpayers here and we have a choice to make,” she concluded.

Stephanie Meadows of Sisters, who said she had no children in the District, accused the Board of not

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performing due diligence.

“What appalls me,” she said, “is that I gave all of you board members information last year that could be researched, and those children were still masked every damn day. Do you have any idea what harm you did every day they had a mask on? You have no clue because you haven’t done any research. That’s my message. Stop torturing these children. They are defenseless. Do your homework.”

Board Member David Thorsett, who attended the meeting via Zoom, challenged the assertion that the Board did not know what it was talking about and that members had not spent time studying the issue.

Thorsett said, “Once this dialogue becomes us versus them and once we start to throw dirt at each other...I heard people say we haven’t done our research and don’t know what we are talking about...those of you saying these things have absolutely no idea what you are saying.”

He continued, saying, “To

suggest that we are not thinking about this and that we are not involved in this ongoing discussion is way off base. We are elected officials and we are doing our doggone best to try to support the process of educating kids here in Sisters in the best, safest way possible, and also a way that upholds the Constitution and all the things that have been discussed tonight. This conversation is far from over, but let’s not dig our heels in so hard that we can’t continue to talk. Do not suggest that we are not doing our very best, because we are.”

Scott Stuart, a Redmond resident, spoke at length and did not pull punches when sharing his opinion of the governor.

“First of all Kate Brown looks at the Constitution like it is a roll of toilet paper. She treats statutory law like it’s garbage. She doesn’t pay attention to it.”

He claimed that masks restrict oxygen concentration levels to dangerous levels that violate Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines.

Stuart continued, “I have to take issue with your letter, Curt, when you said we got this new Delta variant. Next month it will be the Venus variant or the Mars variant. This is not going to stop because we have a governor who is a despot. She is tyrannical and she is an out-of-control public servant.”

Stuart warned the Board,

“You better pay attention because you poked mama bear and her cubs are in the school district. I look at everyone in the State... State agents, media, OSHA, OLCC, ODE, court systems....I look at all these people who are in these state agencies and they are hyenas....They are mocking us. This isn’t about a corona variant, it is about communism.”

He finished with another warning to the Board, suggesting that they could be held individually and jointly liable for gross negligence “if one of these children gets a medical injury or a physical injury (from being forced to

wear a mask).

“Do the right thing as a board, reverse this or you will have we the people, on this side of the state of Oregon, to deal with.”

Ed Owens of Sisters spoke fervently on all three topics. “These mask mandates are completely unlawful and unnecessary and there is no science. And these masks the kids wear don’t protect them from anything. CRT (critical race theory) does not belong in the school. You are brainwashing Marxist ideology into our children. We started out tonight with the Pledge of Allegiance and that is under threat because of this Marxist ideology that you guys are pushing on the kids. Mathematics has nothing to do with ethnicity or anything else. It is gender-neutral and it is blind. But you are all having your teachers taking classes this summer like ‘Mathematics for Social Justice.’”

Scholl told *The Nugget* that Sisters School District is

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